REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in view of the above amendments and the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1 and 3-15 are pending. In the present amendment, Claims 1, 8, and 9 are currently amended. Support for the present amendment can be found in the original specification, for example, at page 6, line 32 to page 7, line 25 and in Figure 2. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that no new matter is added.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1 and 3-15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Bellinger (U.S. Publication No. 2001/0016795) in view of Kawano et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,129,475, hereinafter "Kawano").

Turning now to the rejection of Claims 1 and 3-15 as unpatentable over Bellinger in view of Kawano, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of this rejection and traverses this rejection, as discussed below.

It is noted that the Office Action again cites Bellinger as the primary reference. In the second paragraph on page 6, the Office Action takes the position that Bellinger discloses "comparing the current vehicle speed (CS) to the target speed determined from the cruise control/stored position, and based on the comparing downshift the transmission to a target gear ratio." Thus, Bellinger relies on a target speed (TS) that is set by a cruise control to determine if the downshift is appropriate.

As discussed in previous responses, the claimed method detects the downhill-travel situation based on the environment in which the vehicle is operating, and not as a result of a cruise control setting. The speed at the beginning of the downhill-travel situation is stored when the environment meets predetermined requirements, not because the cruse control has set a target speed. Accordingly, Claim 1 is hereby amended to recite "when the electronic unit does not detect the downhill-travel situation because the slope on which the vehicle is

traveling is not greater than the predetermined threshold slope, updating a variable speed of the vehicle stored in the memory with the current speed of the vehicle."

The cruise control system of Bellinger does not update the saved vehicle speed in the memory with the current speed of the vehicle. Instead, cruise control works on the opposite principle. Specifically, cruise control updates the current speed of the vehicle according to the saved vehicle speed.

Accordingly, Bellinger does not disclose or suggest every feature recited in amended Claim 1. Further, it is respectfully submitted that Bellinger would be rendered unsuitable for its intended purpose if modified to update the saved vehicle speed based on the current speed of the vehicle. Thus, Kawano does not cure the above-noted deficiency of Bellinger.

Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that Bellinger in view of Kawano does not disclose or suggest every feature recited in independent Claim 1. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the rejection of Claim 1, and all claims dependent thereon, as unpatentable over Bellinger in view of Kawano be withdrawn.

Independent Claims 8 and 9, while directed to alternative embodiments, recite similar features to those discussed above with respect to Claim 1. Accordingly, it is also respectfully requested that the rejection of Claims 8 and 9, and all claims dependent thereon, as unpatentable over Bellinger in view of Kawano be withdrawn.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application and the present application is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. A Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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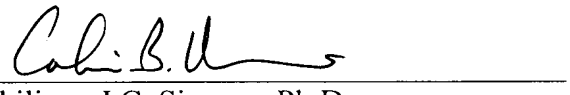

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